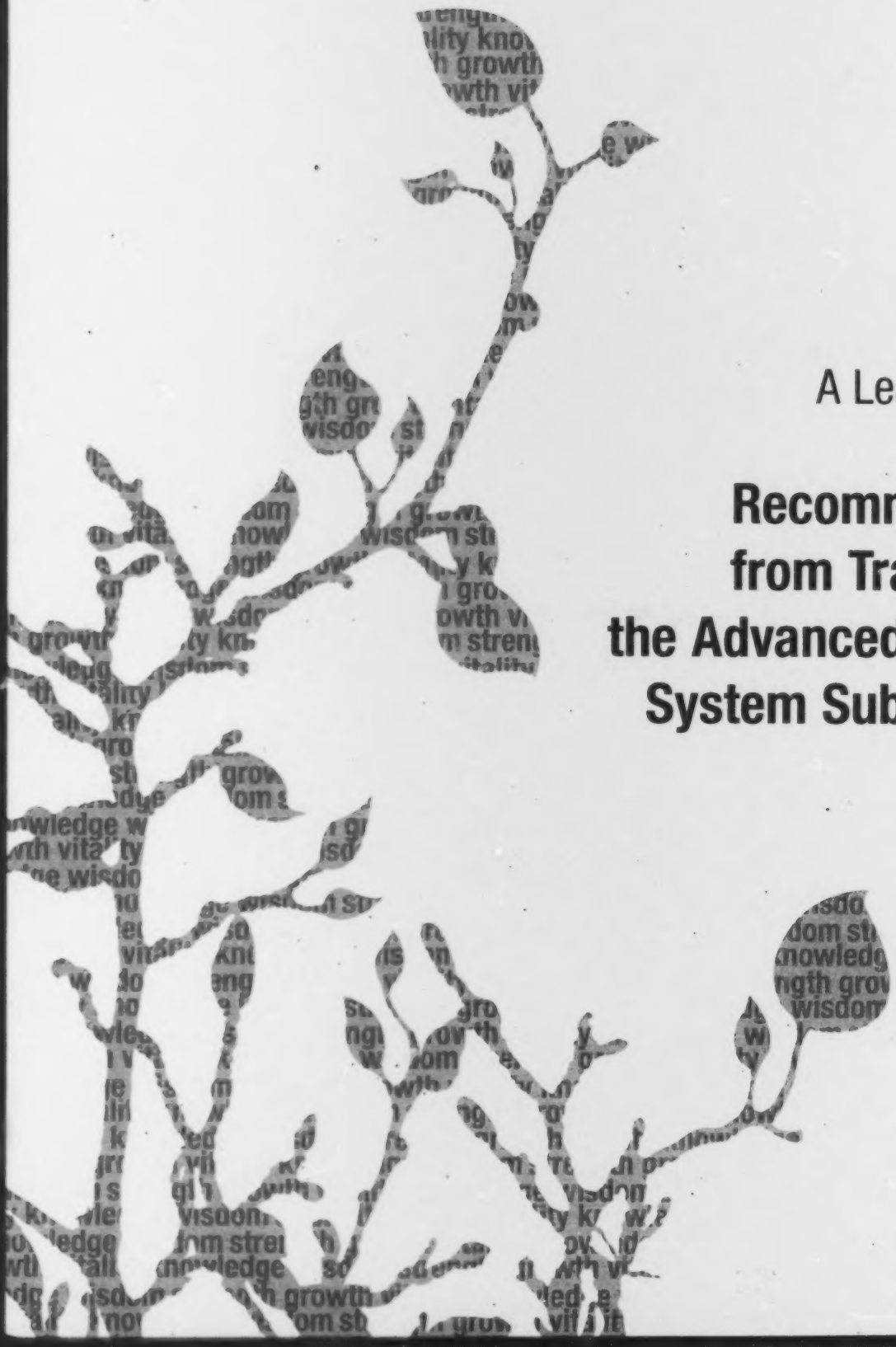
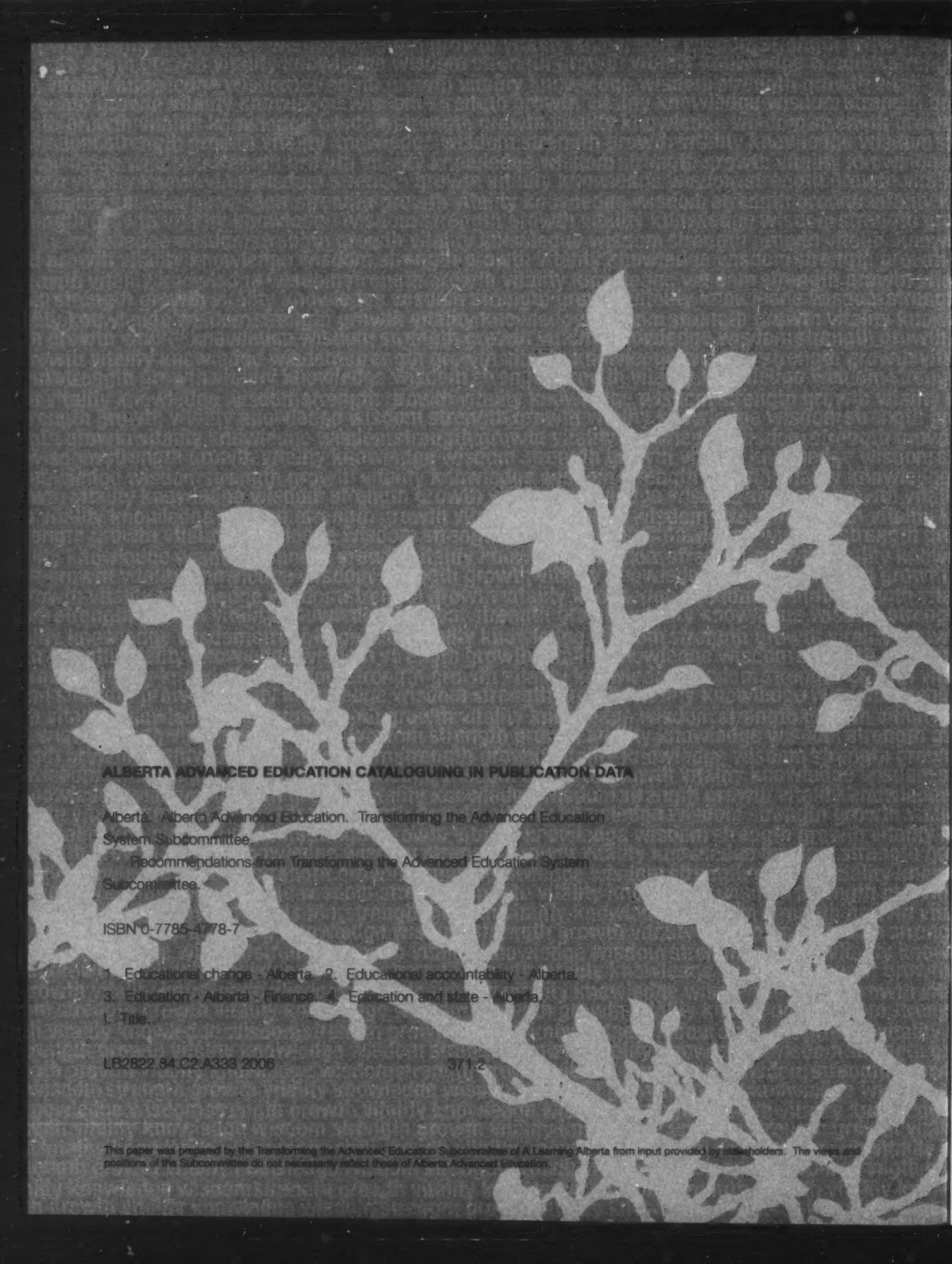


A Learning Alberta

Recommendations from Transforming the Advanced Education System Subcommittee

May 2006

A LEARNING ALBERTA



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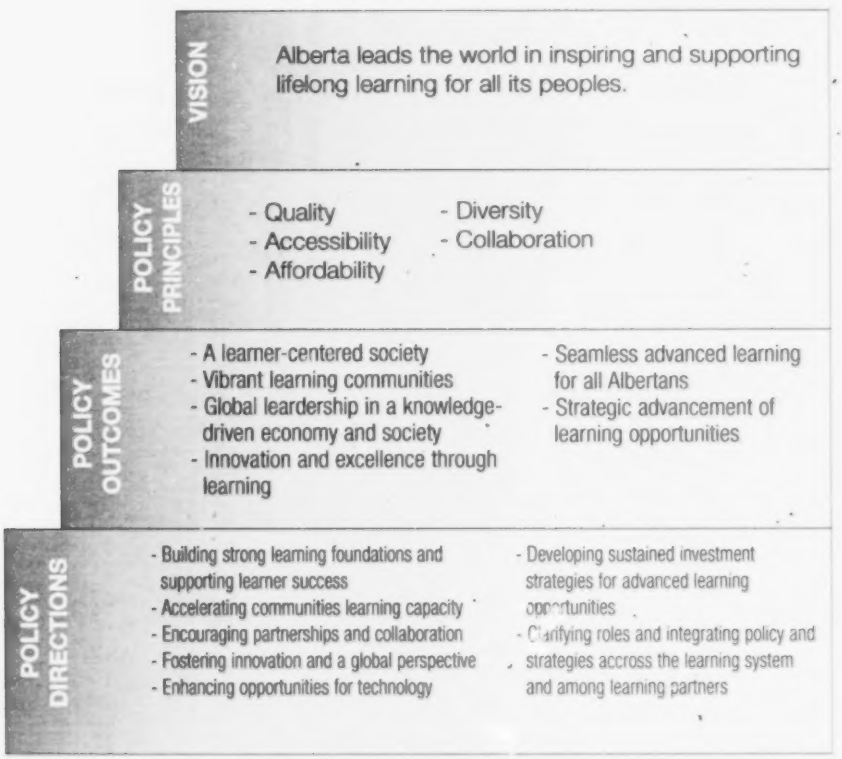
Context

1.1 A Learning Alberta Framework

In November 2005, stakeholders representing a wide cross-section of the advanced education system discussed a draft framework initially developed by the *A Learning Alberta* Steering Committee. The framework that emerged from the discussions held during the Minister's Forum is reflected below.

The *A Learning Alberta* Framework includes a vision for the advanced education system as well as policy principles to guide future direction of the system. Also identified within the framework are key long-term policy outcomes that will be achieved through policy directions and strategies.

At the conclusion of the Forum, the Minister announced the creation of three subcommittees to develop specific recommendations to help further the vision and support the policy outcomes identified below. This document represents the recommendations of the Transforming the Advanced Education System Subcommittee.


VISION
Alberta leads the world in inspiring and supporting lifelong learning for all its peoples.
POLICY PRINCIPLES
- Quality
- Accessibility
- Affordability
- Diversity
- Collaboration
POLICY OUTCOMES
- A learner-centered society
- Vibrant learning communities
- Global leardership in a knowledge-driven economy and society
- Innovation and excellence through learning
- Seamless advanced learning for all Albertans
- Strategic advancement of learning opportunities
POLICY DIRECTIONS
- Building strong learning foundations and supporting learner success
- Accelerating communities learning capacity
- Encouraging partnerships and collaboration
- Fostering innovation and a global perspective
- Enhancing opportunities for technology
- Developing sustained investment strategies for advanced learning opportunities
- Clarifying roles and integrating policy and strategies accross the learning system and among learning partners

1.2 Transforming the Advanced Education System Subcommittee

The "Transformation Subcommittee" was tasked with developing a series of policy strategies and recommendations to shape Alberta's advanced education system to better support the vision and policy directions identified through *A Learning Alberta*. A critical part of this exercise involved examining existing funding programs and policies to ensure they support the vision: *Alberta leads the world in inspiring and supporting lifelong learning for all its peoples*.

Are Alberta's funding mechanisms and accountability frameworks appropriately aligned with the vision? Will these frameworks help achieve an advanced education system that encourages "innovation and excellence," and positions Alberta to be a "global leader in a knowledge-driven economy and society?" Similarly, how can our affordability frameworks – our student assistance programs, tuition fee policies, and scholarship programs – be better configured to support greater diversity among learners, "seamless mobility across learning opportunities," or promote a learner-centered society that broadens access for all Albertans?

These were some of the key questions that became the focus of discussions of the Transformation Subcommittee. The Subcommittee developed recommendations on three important aspects of the system: (1) funding, quality, and accountability; (2) affordability for learners; and (3) innovation, research, and technology.

1.3 Overview of the Key Policy Considerations

1.3.1 Funding, Quality, and Accountability

The *A Learning Alberta* Framework (see Section 1.1) served as the basis for the Subcommittee to develop recommendations on existing funding and accountability frameworks. The objective was to determine how funding and accountability frameworks can best support policy outcomes and determine what changes are necessary to promote system success.

As indicated by the recommendations that follow in Section 2, all of the *A Learning Alberta* Framework policy principles helped to shape the funding, quality, and accountability recommendations, including those relating to: Quality, Accessibility, Diversity, Equity, and Collaboration. For example, the Subcommittee agreed that the Enrolment Planning Envelope, one of the key programs to support system access, needed to be modified to support greater levels of participation across a broader and more inclusive range of programs. Much of the *A Learning Alberta* Framework is premised upon a need to expand participation, particularly among under-represented Albertans. Therefore, funding resources should be directed to a broader range of programs and be available to support a comprehensive array of initiatives aimed at enhancing access and ensuring successful learning outcomes for all Albertans.

The Subcommittee also referred to funding framework principles (see Appendix A) that were established through the dialogues relating to *adequacy* and *predictability*. While there was general support for the funding framework principles, the Subcommittee agreed that benchmarks to national and international best practices needed to be in place to ensure we are reaching our goals and achieving the framework's policy

outcomes. Adequate resources need to be in place to ensure all Alberta post-secondary institutions are positioned to be global leaders within a knowledge-driven economy, and to ensure that learners have access to quality programs that enable them to realize their full potential.

1.3.2 Affordability for Learners

The Subcommittee reviewed a draft Affordability Framework (see Appendix B), which served as a basis for developing recommendations. Through this draft framework, the Subcommittee acknowledged that "affordability" is much broader than tuition. It needs to encompass all costs associated with learning as well as reflect all resources that are available to support learning. The Subcommittee also recognized that affordability programs and policies have a key role to play in achieving policy outcomes, including: access for all Albertans; affordability (during the learning process as well as beyond); enhanced transitions for learners; recognition and support for learner diversity; support for lifelong learning; and promoting learner success and excellence. It is also important that affordability programs and policies reflect an "incentive-based" feature, and have a key role to play in achieving policy outcomes. Student financial assistance programs are not simply an economic calculation of need, they also have a role to play in facilitating higher levels of participation among under-represented groups, as well as attracting and retaining learners or graduates within Alberta.

The Subcommittee also reviewed the current tuition fee policy, a key component of existing affordability programs. The Subcommittee acknowledged that the current tuition fee policy was put in place to generate a higher level of contribution from students that was more in line with the benefits they received. This level was identified as roughly equivalent to 30% of the costs. As a consequence, for the past decade, tuition fee increases outpaced both grant rate adjustments as well as inflation. The Subcommittee agreed that that policy objective has now largely been achieved. To promote affordability, tuition fees should be reduced to 2004-05 levels and increases based on a more moderate rate, such as the Consumer Price Index.

The Subcommittee recognized that this would mean an increasing funding gap for institutions over time, given that the education cost index is anywhere from 3 to 3.5% greater than the Consumer Price Index. The Subcommittee felt that funding strategies would have to be developed to close this gap, if the current level of quality, which all Subcommittee members wanted to significantly enhance, was even to be maintained.

1.3.3 Innovation, Research, and Technology

In developing their recommendations, the Subcommittee reviewed a draft Innovation, Research, and Technology Framework (see Appendix C). This framework recognized innovation as being any creative process that produces value through generating and implementing ideas and new knowledge. The Subcommittee recognized that it is people with skills and ideas that will be the driving force behind Alberta's economy and future quality of life. Alberta's future success and prosperity will depend largely upon our ability to create and utilize the high quality skills and ideas held by Albertans.

Therefore, in considering this broader perspective of innovation, the Subcommittee defined that innovation includes research and knowledge-creation within post-secondary institutions. It also reflects the knowledge transfer and skills that graduates bring to the work place, and the collaboration that occurs through public and private partnerships. The Subcommittee agreed that Alberta's innovation capacity can be enhanced by expanding graduate programs within the province, but also by an environment that is more conducive to nurturing a culture of innovation.

2 Final Recommendations

2.1 Funding, Quality, and Accountability

2.1.1 Quality and Leading in Learning

The Subcommittee agrees that the current funding mechanism that combines base operating grants and inflationary adjustments with targeted funding to support enrolment growth and performance serves the system reasonably well. However, current funding levels are inadequate to increase quality and ensure Alberta is a "Leader in Learning". The Subcommittee supports efforts to more closely align accountability mechanisms with the renewed vision and policy outcomes for the advanced learning system. By linking accountability mechanisms based on best practices to the *A Learning Alberta* vision and policy outcomes, the system will be better positioned to identify future investment strategies for quality enhancement.

1. *A Learning Alberta* has identified a number of key policy outcomes, such as quality, global leadership in a knowledge economy, and innovation and excellence through learning. The ultimate system goal is to ensure graduates exit the system with the appropriate skills to accommodate future social and economic needs of the province, and to reach their own individual potential and achieve their life goals. ***Advanced Education should establish an accountability framework to report on outcomes achieved through A Learning Alberta, including measures/indicators that allow for comparisons/benchmarks with both national and international peer jurisdictions. This framework should serve as a basis to determine future investment strategies to enhance quality. Benchmarks should include both input targets (appropriate participate rate measures) and output targets (credentials awarded, educational attainment, and innovation enhancement measures).***

2. It is understood that Alberta currently provides per student funding for advanced education that is fifth highest in Canada. The Alberta government has set a strategic direction for Alberta to be the Canadian "Leader in Learning". The Subcommittee recommends increases in funding to ensure quality attainment within Alberta's advanced education system that furthers Alberta's place as a national and international leader in accordance with the vision contained in the *A Learning Alberta* Framework. ***It is recommended that funding allocations to support advanced education be initially increased to ensure Alberta lies within the top one-third in Canada. Future funding increases must be in alignment with future benchmarks identifying Alberta's place as a national and international leader.***

3. Maximizing access and quality and ensuring Alberta's place as a national and international leader requires a collaborative, system approach. Alberta's advanced education system needs to be configured in the most appropriate way to support *A Learning Alberta* and achieve the vision. This includes consideration of roles and responsibilities among providers, as well as ensuring that programs support the future needs of students. ***It is recommended that a stakeholder working group be established to further consider roles and responsibilities among all system partners to ensure future design and direction and enable the right program and institutional mix to meet the complex diversity of learners' needs.***

2.1.2 Funding to Support Capacity Expansion

The Subcommittee supports capacity expansion to ensure all Albertans, and in particular under-represented groups, have enhanced access to advanced education studies. The Subcommittee also supports system expansion mechanisms that recognize a broader range of program areas.

4. The Enrolment Planning Envelope (formerly Access Growth Fund) is a key mechanism through which system access is supported. It is recognized that participation levels in Alberta lag well behind that of other jurisdictions. ***As an important first step, future Enrolment Planning Envelope investment needs to be expanded in the short term to a level that is commensurate with encouraging a level of participation and educational attainment that is initially among the top third in Canada. Investments in the medium term must be commensurate with established benchmarks identifying Alberta's place as a national and international leader in advanced education.***

5. The Enrolment Planning Envelope currently is not funded to support enrolment expansion across all program areas. ***Resources should be shifted within the Enrolment Planning Envelope to achieve general enrolment and participation enhancement outcomes, rather than support targeted program-specific enhancements. Benchmarks and accountability measures must be established to ensure investments are achieving system goals for increased participation and successful learner outcomes.***

6. The Enrolment Planning Envelope is currently not structured to recognize learner diversity and the increased costs of providing various support services to underrepresented groups. ***The Enrolment Planning Envelope should recognize learner diversity and the increased costs of enhancing access for underrepresented groups through refinements to its funding allocation mechanisms.***
7. Collaboration among institutions is a central feature of the *A Learning Alberta* Framework. ***The Enrolment Planning Envelope should place a priority on initiatives that maximize access through collaboration involving multiple providers.***

8. A key feature of capacity expansion involves the communication of a long-term access plan, including desired outcomes to ensure access to high quality learning opportunities. ***A long-term access plan should be developed, and targets should be established and communicated for key areas of importance, for example, participation levels of under-represented learners, transition rates from high school, or rural participation levels. An emphasis should also be placed on targets measuring desired outcomes, such as satisfaction with learning opportunities or learner ability to achieve employment or career goals.***

2.2 Affordability for Learners

The Subcommittee supports the proposed Affordability Framework (see Appendix B), including the identified vision, principles and policy outcomes. The following recommendations have been developed under the Affordability Framework, and are organized according to the key policy outcome agreed upon by the Subcommittee.

2.2.1 Access for all Albertans

The Affordability Framework should advance learning for all Albertans. The framework should serve as an incentive to address participation and affordability barriers for all Albertans, whether Aboriginal, low income, rural, or middle class. No Albertan should be prevented from participating as a result of financial or distance barriers.

9. It is recognized that significant participation gaps exist within the advanced education system, particularly for Aboriginal, rural, and low income Albertans. It is also recognized that overall participation rates in Alberta lag significantly behind other jurisdictions in Canada. ***While not diminishing general***

support for learners, priority for future affordability investments should be targeted toward programs to address participation rate gaps of under-represented Albertans, and as a basis to enhance overall participation levels.

10. Student financial assistance programs and other funding mechanisms provide significant resources to support needs-based learners. ***Resources should be made available through expansion of the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund, Access to the Future Fund allocations, and student financial assistance program resources to support incentive-based programs, such as Aboriginal or rural participation incentive grants. Incentive-based funding mechanisms should both encourage initial access and support learners throughout the duration of their studies.***
11. In recognition that proximity to learning opportunities may present a barrier to access for some learners, ***adequate resources should be provided for all learners who must move to attend advanced education studies or who wish to study at a distance.***
12. It is understood that the balance of loans and non-repayable assistance in Canada is skewed toward loans, rather than grants and other forms of non-repayable assistance. Future increases in participation and educational attainment will increasingly depend upon our ability to enhance participation among under-represented populations, which tend to be more debt and risk averse. As well, some programs may not be appropriate for loan-based assistance, such as shorter-term programs that result in strong employment outcomes, but not strong earnings potential for graduates. ***Priority for future investment needs to be shifted in favour of non-repayable and grant-based assistance. For some select short-term programs, grants should be provided in place of loans.***
13. Advanced education participation is closely linked to attitudes, culture, socio-economic factors, and general awareness of learning opportunities. There are many barriers to access and participation that go beyond affordability mechanisms or advanced education system capacity. It is important that tools and programs be enhanced to raise awareness of Albertans of the opportunities and benefits of advanced education. ***Programs such as ambassador programs, interactive technology, or collaborative initiatives with internal and external partners (school jurisdictions, high school guidance counselors, community agencies, and the private sector) should be developed (or enhanced) to generate a higher level of awareness of program and funding opportunities, as well as raise awareness of the overall benefits of advanced education.***

2.2.2 Adequate Resources while Learning

A key dimension of affordability is adequacy of resources to support learners throughout the learning process. The Affordability Framework recognizes that learners must have access to adequate resources while pursuing advanced education.

14. It is recognized that the learning process is becoming significantly more diverse and complex as program opportunities broaden. As a result, expenditures for living costs and educational materials required for successful learning outcomes have expanded and grown beyond what student financial assistance currently accommodates. Learners are more challenged to find the necessary resources to cover a broad array of financial needs. ***Sufficient support should be provided to both full and part-time learners to accommodate actual living expenses and other educational costs, such as books, equipment, tools, or other learning materials necessary for successful learning outcomes.***

15. It is recognized that living costs for learners currently exceed allowances provided by student financial assistance. It is also understood that living allowances should provide learners with sufficient resources to cover basic living expenses within a moderate lifestyle. ***Living allowances should be reviewed annually and adjusted to reflect real cost increases.***

16. In order to allow learners greater flexibility in meeting the financial costs of pursuing higher learning, ***scholarship and part-time earnings exemptions should be increased.***

2.2.3 Debt Manageability

Another key dimension of affordability is reflected in a borrower's ability to repay their debt after leaving their advanced education studies. Loans, grants, and repayment programs and policies should not only support affordability during learning, but also when learners exit the system.

17. While it is important to ensure that learners are provided with adequate resources during studies, it is also important to ensure graduates do not incur a level of debt that is unmanageable given their earnings and individual circumstances. ***Alberta Advanced Education, in conjunction with key stakeholders should identify debt management benchmarks, such as appropriate and reasonable levels of debt for learners. Loans, grants, debt remission, and repayment programs should be responsive to the different abilities of borrowers to repay their debt.***

18. Interest rates charged to students tend to be higher than interest rates charged on student loans in other jurisdictions, and exceed both the government cost of borrowing and borrowing rates that can be secured within private markets. It is understood that many international jurisdictions do not use market-based interest rates. ***Interest rates should be reduced to the prime lending rate as a basis to enhance affordability and debt manageability.***

2.2.4 Enhanced Transitions

The Affordability Framework promotes higher levels of educational attainment and supports enhanced transitions from high school, within the learning system, and between the learning system and the world of work.

19. The Affordability Framework recognizes incentives are required to enhance transition from high school into the advanced education system. It is recognized that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to delay transition. ***It is recommended that Alberta Advanced Education and Alberta Education work with school jurisdictions and community organizations to develop grant programs targeted to disadvantaged populations to encourage greater participation in advanced education***.

20. The Affordability Framework also serves as a basis to enhance attraction and mobility of Alberta's advanced education graduates. Provincial loans could be reduced or eliminated on a return-for-services basis for Albertans who studied in other jurisdictions and return to the province, professional graduates who agree to work in rural areas, or graduates responding to skill shortages in specific occupations. ***Alberta Advanced Education should work with employers and professional organizations to develop loan reduction programs and/or return-for-service programs for Alberta graduates. Grants and scholarships should be used creatively to support attraction and retention of learners within Alberta beyond graduation.***

21. There are a number of programs within the system that require lengthy study periods coupled with residency or license requirements beyond graduation. Many of these students assume high levels of debt by graduation. Currently, students in post-graduate residency programs are not considered to be full-time students during their residency period, and are required to begin student loan repayment, even though they have not reached full earnings potential. ***It is recommended that Alberta Advanced Education grant interest-free status to learners completing post-graduate residency requirements and ensure student loan payments are not required until residency requirements are met.***

22. While Alberta's student financial assistance policy currently sets lifetime loan limits, other jurisdictions use maximum loan limits as a measure to regulate student debt (loan repayment creates borrowing room that can be used for future studies). It is agreed that lifetime loan limits present a barrier to lifelong learning and do not recognize contemporary practices of

ongoing learning to support career changes and/or skills enhancements. ***Student financial assistance policies should be constructed to encourage lifelong learning by removing lifetime loan limits in favour of maximum loan levels.***

2.2.5 Learner Success and Excellence

The Affordability Framework needs to support advancement through the learning system, and achievement of quality learning outcomes.

23. Increasingly, more mature learners or learners whose preference or need is to work while learning, require learning options and learner assistance programs that are supportive of a work-and-learn approach. While Canada student loans and a provincial grant are available to part-time learners, eligibility is highly restrictive and may not meet the needs of part-time learners. ***Alberta student financial assistance programs should be developed to broaden eligibility and meet the financial needs of part-time learners.***

24. Scholarships are a key tool to support and reward attainment of excellence, as a basis to attract graduate students, and enhance Alberta's capacity for innovation. It is recognized that the level of participation in graduate studies within Alberta lags behind other jurisdictions. Overall scholarship support available to graduate students in Alberta also lags significantly behind other major jurisdictions in Canada. ***Scholarships for graduate students should be given a high priority, particularly using new resources available through the expansion of the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund.***

2.2.6 Recognize Learner Diversity

Increasingly, learners are becoming more diverse in terms of age, life situation, engagement in the labour market, and preferences for accessing learning opportunities. Lifelong learning means that learners no longer pursue learning and work along linear paths. The complexity of the economy and the labour market mean that learners may choose new career directions several times during their life, and will be required to continually develop and enhance their skills to remain adaptable. Student financial assistance programs must be responsive to learner diversity and the variable learning pathways chosen by Albertans.

25. Student assistance programs should respond to diverse needs of students, be consistent with lifelong learning, meet the full costs borne by participation in advanced education, and allow for seamless transition. ***Student assistance programs should be modified to better respond learner diversity and recognize contemporary learning and living situations. This could include such measures as providing funding to accommodate technology and/or equipment needs, extending interest-free status to students who become parents during studies, or removing consideration of vehicles as a resource in determining student assistance awards.***

26. A key policy outcome of *A Learning Alberta* is for Alberta to be globally recognized as a knowledge economy and society, and to achieve innovation and excellence through learning. As a policy direction, it is important that Alberta take a leadership role in attracting individuals from other jurisdictions that are already skilled as well as those wishing to pursue learning opportunities in Alberta. ***Enhance the***

availability of student financial assistance programs for learners in immigrant bridging programs and facilitate transition to employment or licensed to practice.

2.2.7 Sustainable and Affordable Advanced Education System

The Affordability Framework supports the long-term sustainability of the *A Learning Alberta* vision. The Affordability Framework ensures alignment of the Tuition Fee Policy, student assistance policies, as well as other policy and funding frameworks to promote affordability.

27. It is understood that tuition fees based on a cost-sharing principle recognizes that both learners and the broader society receive benefits from advanced education. Students should pay a fair and appropriate share of the costs, and tuition fees should not be used as a mechanism to meet institutions' inflationary cost pressures. Future increases in student tuition should not result in the relative student contribution increasing beyond the current level. ***Tuition fees should be reduced from their current level, and thereafter, in 2007-08, linked to a more moderate level of growth (i.e. Consumer Price Index). Accommodating annual inflationary cost pressures experienced by post-secondary institutions should be met through government funding rather than student tuition fees.***

28. Achieving system goals for affordability requires a transparent, flexible, and responsive student financial assistance system. Currently, the existing federal-provincial partnership in delivering student financial assistance limits Alberta's capacity to enhance access, provide sufficient resources to learners, respond to learner diversity, and ensure debt manageability. Federal involvement also contributes to system complexity for learners. ***The Subcommittee recommends that Alberta Advanced Education investigate the benefits and implications of dissolving the federal/provincial student financial assistance partnership.***

2.3 Innovation, Research, and Technology

The Subcommittee supports the Innovation, Research and Technology Framework (see Appendix C), including the vision, principles and policy outcomes identified.

29. Enhancing capacity for innovation and research relies on expanding opportunities and spaces for graduate and post-doctoral students across a broad range of programs. Expanding the number of graduate students also requires an expanded number of faculty members. ***Ensure that***

enrolment growth plans through the Enrolment Planning Envelope include an expansion of spaces for graduate students across a broad range of program areas.

30. Expanding graduate student capacity also requires expanding financial support to graduate students through scholarships, funding to support assistantships, and research opportunities. Funding supports also are required for professional development activities, such as conference travel or research development. Over the longer-term, increasing the number of graduate students also requires raising awareness and access to opportunities for research for undergraduates. ***Scholarships and other non-repayable financial support for graduate students should be given a high priority in the Access to the Future Fund, Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund expansions, and other funding vehicles. Incentive funding should be used to attract high quality scholars, researchers, and faculty from other jurisdictions in Canada and internationally. Research opportunities for undergraduates should be expanded and accompanied by research stipends, which serves to raise awareness/research skills and provide additional measures to support affordability.***

31. It is accepted that enhancing our innovation capacity benefits from leveraging federal, provincial and private sector investments. Provincial investments in research require greater alignment of funding opportunities among federal, provincial, and private sector partners. ***Alberta Advanced Education should work with other government partners to ensure provincial investments for research are in alignment with other funding that maximizes investment opportunities.***

32. Enhancing Alberta's overall innovation performance requires increasing the research capacity of all sectors of the advanced education system, while respecting the individual mandates of institutions and the regulatory framework guiding the system. Growing this capacity requires continued investment and enhanced collaboration among post-secondary institutions, and within the broader innovation system, including the private sector. ***Explore funding opportunities that increases research capacity within Alberta's universities, colleges and technical institutes, as well as funding incentives to increase the engagement of the private sector in applied research and commercialization.***

33. Ensuring a high degree of knowledge transfer may be fostered through increased learning/work opportunities for students and graduates. It may also be fostered through enhanced access to technology and digital information. ***Alberta Advanced Education should work with post-secondary institutions and the public and private sector to increase the number of internships, cooperative learning opportunities, and research fellowships for learners and graduates. Continue to expand broad access to digital information for all Albertans through technology and mechanisms such as the Lois Hole Digital Library.***

34. Increasing access to learning opportunities, expanding supports and services to learners, and building Alberta's innovation capacity requires sustained investment in technology development, infrastructure, and utilization. Maximizing the full potential of technology is best served through collaborative initiatives among post-secondary institutions and other learning providers, communities, and the public and private sector. ***Provide funding opportunities to support technology development, infrastructure, and enhance technology utilization within the advanced education system.***

35. It is understood that beyond direct benefits for the advanced education system, technology has a pivotal role in building a sustainable and globally-competitive, knowledge-based economy. ***It is recommended that Alberta Advanced Education work with system stakeholders and other partners to develop a Learning and Technology Framework that reflects the advanced education perspective and advances learning and innovation opportunities across the advanced education system***.

36. Increasing Alberta's innovation capacity requires balanced support for pure, sponsored, and applied research. Balanced support is also required to ensure appropriate investment across a broad base of research areas, as well as support for targeted areas where research strength and excellence are demonstrated. Post-secondary institutions should continue to develop in areas of research strength and enable partnerships and collaboration to enhance areas of research excellence. ***Advanced education stakeholders, government partners, and the private sector should collaborate to provide research funding to institutions across a broad array of areas. Institutions should be supported in their areas of research strength and excellence. Consideration of support should be given for centres of research excellence in areas of research strength.***

37. Provincial research support in areas of strategic priority has contributed to important research outcomes and the overall development of Alberta's innovation capacity. However, it is recognized that provincial funding to support the social sciences, humanities, and arts has not kept pace with funding for science, engineering, and health. Research in the areas of social science, humanities, and arts produces fundamental benefits for Albertans. ***It is recommended that the Government of Alberta establish an endowment to support research in the social sciences, arts, and humanities.***

Appendix A: Funding Framework Principles

Accessible: investment mechanisms and policies should be structured to facilitate higher levels of advanced education participation. The system should have high capacity to ensure that all qualified Albertans who are inspired to pursue advanced education studies have the opportunity to do so.

Accountable: investment mechanisms and policies should ensure that results are measured relative to both system goals to achieve a world-class advanced education system as well as goals of individual advanced education providers.

Adequate: investment mechanisms and policies should provide the advanced education system with adequate resources to support a high quality, world-class system that can meet the longer term strategic goals set by government and citizens.

Collaborative: investment mechanisms and policies should enhance collaboration among advanced education providers, the private sector, and non-profit and community organizations to ensure that quality and capacity enhancements are maximized.

Cost-shared: investment mechanisms and policies should continue to ensure that learners and society share the costs of the advanced education system in recognition of the shared benefits received.

Equitable: investment mechanisms and policies should be equitable, taking into consideration institutional differences such as program mix, size and location.

Innovation and excellence: investment mechanisms and policies should encourage and reward innovation and excellence within the advanced education system through the inclusion of incentive-based funding components.

Predictable: investment mechanisms and policies should encourage planning that is consistent with system goals and Alberta Advanced Education's business plan. In addition, learners and providers should be given sufficient lead time to deal with intended changes.

Sustainable: investment mechanisms and policies should maximize the return on investment to society and ensure that society's investments in advanced education public assets are maintained for future generations. Additionally, society should view system funding as in investment rather than an expense.

Appendix B: Affordability Framework

VISION:

Alberta's advanced education system requires an affordability vision that acknowledges learner diversity and recognizes the importance of an excellent and accessible system. The following vision notes the importance of establishing Alberta as a global leader:

> ***A world class affordable system that promotes access for all Albertans, recognizes individual circumstances, and rewards excellence.***

Policy Principles:

Accessible: An affordability framework should ensure all motivated Albertans have access to learning opportunities. Beyond ensuring that financial need is not a barrier to access, programs must increase awareness of opportunities, and the costs and benefits of pursing higher learning.

Accountable and outcomes-focused: Programs and policies should be outcomes-focused. Providers and government must have strong measures in place to ensure that learners can make informed choices regarding their learning opportunities, and that quality programs are in place to support learners' needs. As well, a strong accountability framework ensures that government and providers are in a position to understand how programs and policies are advancing the system toward achievement of policy outcomes over time.

Incentive-based: An affordability framework should do more than meet financial and economic needs. It should motivate learners by providing incentives for on-time completion, enhanced participation rates, progress through high school, transition from high school, seamless transition to and from work, and rewarding excellence.

Predictable: An affordability framework should allow for predictability and planning for students. Advanced education is a substantial investment, and programs and policies should facilitate planning among students, prospective students and/or their families.

Quality: Promotion of learner and system quality through incentive and merit-based mechanisms that reward excellence will achieve the vision of a world-class system.

Responsive: The affordability framework should respond to diverse student needs and circumstances. The framework must be enabling to students throughout their lifelong learning, and policies must adapt over time to ensure they are meeting policy objectives and achievement of the vision.

Seamless: An affordability framework needs to facilitate and allow for smooth transitions throughout the stages of learning, as well as transitions to and from work and learning.

Shared costs and benefits: An affordability framework needs to be comprehensive, reflecting the full range of costs and resources involved in advanced education. A shared costs and benefits principle reflects that society benefits considerably through higher educational attainment.

Simplicity: An affordability framework must ensure that students have high awareness of programs and funding opportunities. Reducing complexity in accessing information and funding resources promotes affordability and increased access to educational opportunities.

Policy Outcomes:

Adequate Resources While Learning: An affordability framework needs to ensure learners have access to adequate resources throughout the learning process.

Debt Manageability: Loan, grant, and repayment programs and policies need to support affordability when learners exit the system, whether as a result of graduation or to transition to the world of work before completing their studies.

Enhanced Participation and Access Among All Albertans: Enhanced affordability mechanisms, policies, and programs remove barriers to access and increase participation in higher learning among all Albertans.

Enhanced Transitions: An affordability framework should support enhanced transitions from high school, and from work, into advanced education learning opportunities. An affordability framework promotes higher levels of educational attainment.

Enhanced Transparency: Affordability programs enhance transparency and simplicity of funding opportunities for learners.

Learner Success and Excellence: An affordability framework must support advancement through the learning system, and achievement of quality learning outcomes.

Recognize Learner Diversity: An affordability framework should recognize that learners are increasingly coming from a wide range of backgrounds and in various stages of their learning lives. Some have had extensive attachment to the labour market, while others have had marginal attachment and require development of foundation skills. Many learners have children of their own. Many learners are maintaining their attachment to the world of work while they learn, and many come from other countries.

Sustainable and Affordable Advanced Learning System: An affordability framework should support long-term sustainability of the vision. A broad framework should reflect the tuition fee policy, student assistance policies, as well as other policy and funding frameworks. Through alignment of these policies and programs, achievement of the vision is possible.

Well-Informed: An affordability framework should acknowledge that learners and their families need to be well aware of available learning opportunities, the importance of these opportunities, and have a positive perspective of the full costs of advanced education as well as the resources that are available to support learning.

A Learning Alberta: A Proposed Framework for Affordability

Vision	Policy Principles	Policy Outcomes	Policy Actions
A world affordable system that promotes access for all Albertans, recognizes individual circumstances, and rewards excellence	accessible	adequate resources while learning	- Aboroginal grant - Aboriginal ambassadors and mentors - Access to the Future Fund - allowable resource exemptions
	accountable and outcomes-focused	debt manageability	- apprenticeship supports - common application system
	incentive-based	enhanced participation and access among all Albertans	- completion grant - debt benchmark - designation policy - graduate student fund - immigrant bridging program
	predictable	enhanced transitions	- interest rate reduction - international scholarshipa - K-12 incentive grant
	quality	enhanced transparency	- living allowance increases - loan to grant conversion - low income grant
	responsive	learner success and excellence	- management information - opt out of federal student assistance - parental leave interest free status
	seamless	recognize learner diversity	- parental loan program - part-time assistance - raising awareness
	shared costs and benefits	sustainable and affordable advanced learning system	- responsive repayment - return for service grant - rural incentive bursary - scholarship exemption
	simplicity	well-informed	- short-term program grants - technology in learning - tuition deferral - Tuition Fee Policy - vehicle exemption

Appendix C: Innovation, Research, and Technology Framework

VISION:
A vibrant innovation system in Alberta sustains a prosperous, knowledge-based, and globally competitive economy, and increases social well-being for all Albertans.

Policy Principles:

People-centered: People are the shaping force in a knowledge-based economy, and it is people with skills, new ideas, and creativity that will help secure Alberta's future prosperity and capacity for innovation. Policies should recognize that our innovation potential relies upon resources embedded in people – skills, education, and values.

Diversity: Alberta's innovation system is enhanced and supported through a rich diversity of learners, educational providers and programs, businesses and industries, ideas, and knowledge creation endeavors. It is recognized that innovation flourishes in a collaborative and multi-disciplinarian environment.

Knowledge-based: Alberta's advanced learning system plays a critical role in the generation of new knowledge that supports both learning and research. It is recognized that new knowledge needs to be shared to benefit learners and the broader society, enhance Alberta's innovation potential, and increase our economic and social well-being. Ideas and information must flow across learning institutions, industries and employers, as well as the volunteer and the public sectors.

Collaborative: Engagement in innovation and research, as well as technology and knowledge transfer, is enhanced by higher levels of collaboration within the innovation system. Initiatives should support collaboration among post-secondary institutions, research institutes, centres of excellence, government, and the private sector.

Culture of innovation and creativity: A culture of innovation accepts new ideas, is adaptable to change, and embraces diverse people, communities, and cultures. Alberta supports a culture of innovation and creativity, which nurtures people and organizations to be idea generators who are adaptable and responsive to change, and capable of recognizing and acting upon new challenges and opportunities. People and organizations must have the capacity to understand and manage risks.

Global perspective: Alberta holds a broad perspective of innovation and recognizes the benefits of innovation cross economic, social and community spheres. Initiatives that build and sustain national and global innovation networks and ensure Alberta's economy remains globally competitive should be supported.

Policy Outcomes:

Increased quality of life: Innovation and creativity within the advanced education system improve and sustain a high quality of life for all Albertans, and enhances the capacity of Albertans to reach their full potential.

Attraction and retention of high quality people: Alberta has an enhanced capacity for innovation through an environment that is conducive to the attraction and retention of the best faculty, staff, students, and knowledge workers. Alberta recognizes that high quality people are the catalyst for a building and sustaining a vibrant innovation system.

Quality knowledge infrastructure: Alberta's capacity for innovation is enhanced through strategic and sustained investment in facilities, technology, and equipment.

Knowledge development and transfer: Post-secondary institutions are key players in research and innovation activities, including the development of new knowledge, new ideas, new discoveries, and new applications. Advanced education learners and graduates are pivotal vehicles of knowledge transfer from the learning system to the economy and society.

High levels of private sector engagement in innovation: The private sector contributes to increasing Alberta's research performance and capacity for innovation through higher levels of investment and collaboration post-secondary institutions.

Increased collaboration within the innovation system: Alberta's post-secondary institutions are drivers of collaborative innovation activities both within the advanced education system, and with private sector businesses and industries, commercialization and technology transfer organizations, and government. Increased collaboration enhances Alberta's innovation capacity as well as information-sharing across the innovation system.

Global Leadership: Alberta is recognized as a global innovation leader and ensures innovation excellence by measuring itself against world-class innovative systems.

A Learning Alberta: Draft Framework for Innovation, Research, and Technology

Vision	Policy Principles	Policy Outcomes	Policy Directions
A vibrant innovation system in Alberta sustains a prosperous, knowledge-based, and globally competitive economy, and increases social well-being for all Albertans	People-centred Diversity Knowledge-based Collaborative Culture of innovation and creativity Global perpective	Increased quality of life Attraction and retention of high quality people Quality knowledge infrastructure Knowledge development and trasfer High levels of private sector engagement in innovation Increased collaboration within the innovation system Global leadership	Expanding graduate spaces and supports Enhanced support for undergraduate research capacity Enhanced opportunities for interships and cooperative learning experiences Supporting international education and research opportunities Enhancing support for technology Providing balanced support for innovation

Appendix D: Alberta's Advanced Education System

Alberta's advanced education system is comprised of public board-governed institutions, community consortia, private providers, and community-based organizations – all offering a broad range of credit and non-credit programs to learners throughout the province and beyond. In addition, numerous boards and councils support the system by providing coordination, planning and policy advice to Alberta Advanced Education and the Minister.

Advanced Education Providers:

There are twenty-one public, board-governed institutions in Alberta, consisting of four universities, fourteen colleges, two technical institutes and the Banff Centre for Continuing Education. These institutions offer a variety of credit learning opportunities including skills training, certificates, diplomas, applied degrees, and degree programs. Universities offer the vast majority of degree programs, while colleges and technical institutes generally focus on applied degree, diploma, and certificate programs. A range of non-credit courses are also offered, however, non-credit courses and programs are funded primarily through student fees and do not require program approval from the Minister of Advanced Education. In addition to the twenty-one public, board governed institutions, Alberta's public advanced education system includes community consortia, which coordinate the delivery of credit learning opportunities in communities not directly served by an advanced education institution.

Alberta's advanced education system includes both for-profit and not-for-profit private providers. Much like the public, board-governed institutions, Alberta's private providers offer a range of credit and non-credit programming. There are currently eight private providers authorized to offer degree programs in select disciplines such as arts, science and education. Seven of these providers operate on a not-for-profit basis (the private university colleges) while the eighth provides advanced education learning opportunities as a service for profit (DeVry Institute of Technology). Based on an historical agreement, the seven private university colleges receive ongoing operating grants from Alberta Advanced Education. This funding arrangement was part of the Alberta government's overall strategy to expand degree access to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population, growing in response to both inter-provincial mobility and the baby boom population.

In addition to private providers with degree granting status, Alberta's advanced education system includes other private providers that offer non-regulated (non-credit) programs. Some providers are affiliated with Alberta public post-

secondary institutions, colleges in the United States, and Canadian or American bible college/theological schools or associations. These providers do not receive operating grants from Alberta Advanced Education. However, students enrolled in designated programs may be eligible for student financial assistance depending on their financial situation.

There are also more than 140 private institutions offering licensed vocational programs under authority of the *Private Vocational Schools Act*. These programs are vocation specific, generally less than one-year in duration, and are created to respond to current labour market demands. The *Private Vocational Schools Act* requires schools to pay application and licensing fees and to post security to protect tuition paid by students.

Schools are also required to report annually on graduation and job placement outcomes for each student in each licensed program. Like most other private providers (with the exception of the seven private university colleges receiving limited public funding), vocational schools do not receive operating grants from Alberta Advanced Education. However, students enrolled in designated programs may be eligible for financial assistance depending on their situation.

Supporting Boards and Councils:

A number of boards and councils provide coordination, planning and policy advice to the Minister of Advanced Education. These boards and councils include:

Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfers (ACAT)

ACAT provides advice and support to the Minister of Advanced Education on policies, guidelines and procedures to facilitate transfer agreements among Alberta's advanced education providers. ACAT encourages negotiations among institutions with the goal of expanding educational opportunities for Alberta students. ACAT also publishes the annual Alberta Transfer Guide to provide students with accurate information on admission and transfer opportunities. An on-line version of the Alberta Transfer Guide is available and updated regularly.

Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board (AAITB)

AAITB provides advice to the Minister of Advanced Education on labour market trends and needs, as well as training and certification requirements for trades and designated occupations. In addition to its advisory role, AAITB sets training and certification standards for trades and designated occupations, appoints members for various trades-related committees, develops regulations for the Minister's approval, and develops policies to recognize equivalent training programs.

Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC)

The eleven member CAQC was established upon proclamation of the *Post-Secondary Learning Act* in March 2004. The council reviews proposals from resident advanced education institutions (public and private) interested in offering new degree programs. The council's principle role is to ensure program quality – the Minister of Advanced Education will retain a system coordinating role.

Students Finance Board (SFB)

Under authority of the *Students Finance Act* and the *Alberta Heritage Scholarship Act*, SFB provides advice to the Minister of Advanced Education on matters related to student financial assistance and scholarships. In addition to this advisory role and on the Minister's behalf, SFB may also conduct investigations or research into issues related to student financial assistance.

Advanced Education System Collaboration:

One of the key challenges is in ensuring that the system operates as a system – an interdependent group of providers forming a unified whole. There is a diverse range of providers of advanced education opportunities within Alberta. Each brings something unique, for example, in terms of the programs offered, the region served, role within the community, the way in which they interact with the community, and the client group served. There is no question that diversity is an important feature of any system. However, it is also recognized that the system can achieve much more through collaborative action and by working in concert to achieve common objectives. The sum of the whole is worth more than the sum of the individual parts – is highly relevant in the context of a learner-centered system.

Another key challenge for the advanced education system is to maximize access, affordability, and quality, while allowing for sustainability of the system for future generations. It is not feasible for the full breadth of programs to be available within all regions of the province; not including specializations and majors, there are over 1,100 approved programs being offered throughout the public system alone. It is neither sustainable for every program to be available in each region nor to be designed and delivered on site. As well, given that the number of earned doctorates awarded in Canada will not replace the expected faculty who will retire over the next decade, our approaches to expanding access within Alberta, including regional access, will need further and careful consideration.

A LEARNING ALBERTA